

# *Kizuna*

8

## *Bonds of Love*



Explicit  
Content:  
Parental  
Advisory

Story and Art by Kazuma Kodaka



## The Story So Far...

RANMARU SAMEJIMA and KAI ENJOJI have been inseparable lovers since college. Ranmaru is a former kendo champion, while Kai has turned his back on his family, which runs a criminal yakuza empire. They were happy, except for the occasions when Kai's half-brother, KAI SAGANO, showed up to wreak havoc with his repeated attempts to seduce Ran and otherwise cause general mischief.

After many adventures (and romantic calamities), Kai decided to propose the unthinkable: to ask Ranmaru to marry him!

Unfortunately, he was kidnapped by a rival gang before he could ask. It was up to romantic rivals Ran and Kai to rescue him before he could be murdered by the bloodthirsty yakuza.

Sick with worry, they turned to Kai's bodyguard, MASANORI ARAKI for help. Masa called upon a hitman/bodyguard named TASHIRO for help, and before long Kai was a little worse for wear, but alive and in one piece. Once he was healthy again, Kai gathered up his nerve and popped the question. Ranmaru accepted, and the lovers knew that the time had finally come to embark upon the next phase of their lives together.

They planned a long honeymoon in Kyoto, and were accompanied by Kai and Masa. Kai is desperate to finally make love to Masa, but has been unsuccessful thus far.

Which leads us to the latest chapter of our story.





**KIZUNA**



Wait a minute... Are you saying this is **ALL MY FAULT???**

Of course I was tired! You're putting me through an emotional wringer! You've gotten me all worked up over nothing.

Why do you put so much pressure on us? You were asleep... Tired from crying.



All right, then... Fine! Let's do this!

We're doing it **TONIGHT**, all right?!



Ah... Really?

Tonight, then.

Understood.



What are you doing now, Kai?

**STRUGGLE!**  
ががが



So no more hugs, okay? Not unless it's gonna lead to...

You heard me. I want to have more of an adult relationship.



Last night still pissed us by without anything happening. It's not fair!



Sigh... I'm sorry. It's just that this is all so strange, you know?

We know that we like each other, but it doesn't matter.





TANTRUM!



GAARR!

Please don't hit me with the seat cushion again. It hurts.



WUFF!



What do you know about pain? I don't have breasts like a woman! You don't find me attractive! I'm a boney nothing!

I don't have ANY SEX APPEAL AT ALL!



It hurts, Masa? Really?



What are you, some kinda COMEDIAN!? You know what I'm SAYING!

SLAP!

Of course. Tonight we'll sleep together all night long. Personally, I could use the rest.



All right then, Kai. Since you insist.



I want a straight answer from you, Masa.... Once and for all!



Frankly, I find this conversation troubling. Did you ever stop to consider that perhaps I'm simply not in the mood?

And don't give me any lame excuses that it's because I'm a man!



Yeah,  
but  
I like  
this one.

But  
doesn't  
your room  
have  
memors?

Not  
to be  
rude,  
Sengano...



See,  
Masa!  
I'm  
sorry  
my body  
doesn't  
get you  
in the  
mood!!"

Please,  
Kai.  
There's no  
reason to  
put yourself  
through this  
...Urff!



Please,  
Kai...  
That's not what  
I'm saying.  
Sigh...  
I knew he  
wouldn't  
understand.

This is  
troublesome.







Ah, that sounds great.

Shall I prepare some tea?

There's a courtyard right over there. The weather's wonderful today.



Oh my! Taking a walk, Kai?

Hello Ma'am.



Ahh!

Actually, I don't think *that's* the problem.

If I had as much sex appeal as you did, I'd be able to lure him in and make it happen...



Certainly.

Right, this way, please.

We might as well accept such a kind offer.



I'm surprised Araki puts up with that damn brat.



Great! And don't come back, either!

I'm surrounded by idiots! I'm going out for a walk.



Taking a stroll?

Howdy.



My apologies. Master Kai has issues...

You don't have to tell me!

I got kicked out by the other two.



Ah.



I wonder  
if I'm  
being  
spoiled...



I want to  
get closer  
to Masa.  
I want to  
kiss him.

Not the  
soothing  
kind of kiss...  
I want  
us to kiss  
like lovers.



Once  
people  
fall in love,  
one may  
sense sex  
appeal for  
something  
that may do  
nothing for  
someone  
else.

It's not  
that simple.  
Every  
individual  
has a  
different  
sense of  
sex appeal.

What are  
you talking  
about?  
Isn't it  
simply  
better  
to have  
sex appeal  
than not?



That's  
right.

Love goes  
both ways?



That's the  
only way  
your relationship  
will ever find the  
right balance.

Kai, you can't  
just demand  
affection.  
Love must go  
both ways.



He said it  
troubled him  
because I'm  
so precious.



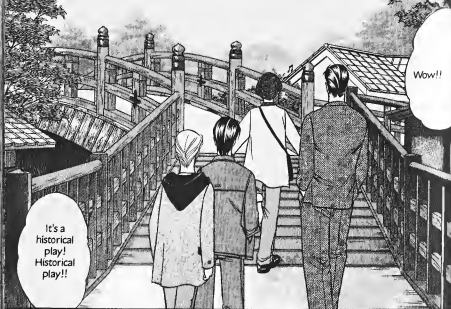
What did  
Amaki say  
about you?



I don't  
want to be  
treated  
as if I'm  
something  
that may  
break.

Well,  
sorta,  
but...

How  
affectionate  
of him. He  
cares so much  
about you.  
Isn't that  
great?





This place is great. It has the feel of antiquity.

Etgamura and Arashiyama.

I haven't been here since elementary school, but nothing has changed.

That's true. This is pretty far out.

During my elementary school trip, I went around the temple, but I never came this far.



I'm really glad we came.

I guess a calm and satisfying time must be referring to times like this.



Ah!

This isn't all that different from the picnic.

Well...

It's still fun so it's all good.

\* Echigoya



No, no, I should say that you are, Mr. Ambassador.

Oh, you are quite the evil one.

I guess they can't help but do it at least once.

Yeah, that's their rule.



If you keep that up, I'm ditching you guys. How embarrassing!

Ah! He beat me to it!!

Do you not see this tattoo of the blowing cherry blossom?







Yes,  
it was  
delicious.

Pardon my  
intrusion.  
Are you  
done with  
your meal?



Yeah...



Well, when  
you're done  
eating that,  
we should  
get going.  
It's getting  
late.



Oh my,  
you must've  
walked quite a bit.  
Shall I prepare the  
bed early tonight?

Ouch.  
My feet  
are  
swollen.

Please.



Really?  
That'll help  
a lot.

Should I  
massage  
them for you?



Sure.  
Thanks  
a lot.

Relax and  
wait a bit.  
I'll have the  
futon readied  
right away.



Well, we  
walked  
around a lot.

We sure  
are a lot  
today.



Hi,  
that was  
filling.





Who, what do you mean!?

What shall we do?



Can calm down!

Guts for men!!  
Huh?  
Or was it guts for women!?



Ah...



Well, umm...



THUMP



Sure.

The bed has been prepared. Please, help yourselves.



Gyo-I  
For some reason, the futons are closer to each other than they were yesterday!!



Thank you.

Good night.

Well then, I'll excuse myself.



I don't understand you.



Which one of us are you referring to? You amuse yourself by embarrassing others!!

It's better not to show such a provocative manner.



Legs?



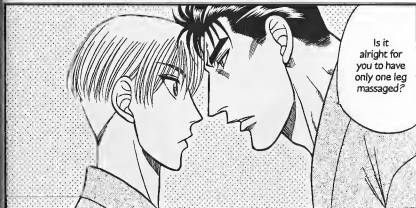
Your legs...



I know you would regret it later, Master.

That's why I'm telling you to stop provoking me.

Plop



Is it alright for you to have only one leg massaged?



You thought saying that would make it easier for you to babysit me! So you were just playing with me!!

Was saying that you liked me just a way to weasel out?

I have no idea what you're talking about!



That's because you were overly conscious, Master.

Hey, you did that on purpose, didn't you?! Now you got me mad!!

Well I did! Was it wrong to do so?



Wha...?





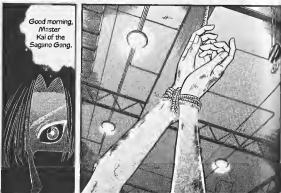
But I  
wouldn't  
forgive you  
if you ran  
away now.















It's alright.  
Calm down.



Ha...!  
Haa...

That's right.  
Don't panic.  
Inhale slowly  
then exhale...



すう...  
INHALE



Maaa,  
I'm sorry,  
I...

It's alright.

Shhh!  
Don't worry  
about anything,  
just go to sleep.



すう...  
INHALE



Guh...

COUGH



A cruel  
memory of  
the past.

Enough fear  
to stop his  
breathing.  
It must have  
been deep  
within a corner  
of Master's  
heart.



Noooo!!  
My hands!  
Release  
my hands!!

An extreme  
psychotic  
episode.



It's fine.  
Just go  
to sleep.

I'm...  
sorry.



I'll always  
watch you.  
Don't worry  
about  
anything  
and close  
your eyes.



I've  
opened  
an old  
wound.



Ugh...





Eniya!



Are you sulking!

I'm not sulking.



It's something you always do.

Cut it out!



UHAHAHA



Sugoi



Mm?

Hey!



ふうっ



You were thinking about Kai just now, right?



Forget it. I'm going to sleep!



How did you know?

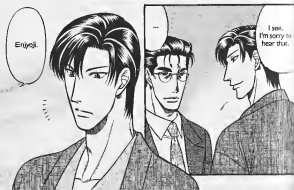


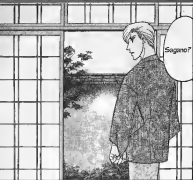












Sagano?

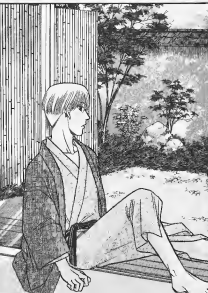


Sagano,  
it's me.  
I'm coming in.



Once we  
are apart,  
it'll be hard  
for me to see him.  
If anything  
happens to  
Master...

Would  
you please  
contact me?  
At any time,  
I wouldn't mind.



Saga...



I apologize  
for the  
inconvenience  
this may  
cause you.  
Thank you.

I  
understand.



If something  
happens,  
huh?







How could  
I forget  
about it?



Sagara,  
you...



Saying that  
it's no big deal  
for one to be  
raped because  
the person  
is a man...

That's the  
fallacy of people  
who never  
experienced it.



What do  
I have to  
do in order  
to overcome,  
to be strong  
like you?



What do I  
have to do  
in order for  
me to act  
as if it never  
happened?



How much  
damage such  
an act causes...!  
I ended up  
doing the  
same to you,  
when I  
should've  
known  
better...!

It's not just  
the body.  
Such a  
despicable  
deed tears  
one's heart  
asunder.



The freedom  
taken away,  
placed in a  
way as if the  
body would  
tear in two...

It feels  
as if you're  
going to  
suffocate,  
you can't  
breathe but  
you can't  
pass out  
either.

# KIZUNA

## 絆

きずな





Probably.  
I think  
he knows.



It's not as if  
you rejected  
Araki's hands.  
He probably  
guessed that  
the cause was  
something else.  
Am I correct?



I think Masa's  
feelings were  
hurt far more  
than mine,  
because it  
brought back  
the memory...

After I  
was raped,  
it was Masa  
who came  
to rescue me.  
The one who did  
it was someone  
Masa knew, so...



I told him  
to get rid  
of the habit...

But I end up  
cornering  
him into it  
all the time.

He didn't show it,  
but I'm sure he's  
blaming himself.  
He has a  
habit of taking  
all the burdens  
onto himself...



Even though  
it was the  
hands of the  
person most  
precious to me,  
it was scary...



It's  
different.  
I know it's  
different  
from such  
violence.



You know  
Araki's heart  
is bigger  
than that.

Sagano...



What  
should  
I do?

I hurt  
Masa's  
feelings.





The same goes for Enryoji and me as well.

You've both trying to distance each other by saying that getting closer would hurt the other one.

It is true that if you put two people together, they get hurt whether it's something small or big.



What happens after the pain....?

However, even if you and Araki get hurt just like Enryoji and me, there's a bit of a difference.

Do you know what the difference is?

That's right.



You must also reveal your wounds to your lover.

Because if it's your lover's wounds, you won't look away.



I wonder if it won't work.



I feel like the closer I try to get to him, the more he gets hurt.



Really...

I wonder if it won't work...

If he were to stay by my side.



...?

You and Araki sure are similar to each other.

Both of you are saying the same thing.





Yes.  
I'm sorry.

Displaying  
such an  
embarrassing  
moment.

RUB



I believe the  
Kai Sogano.  
I know it  
definitely  
not weak.

You're a man  
who defeated  
many veterans  
to become the  
number one in  
Kendo in Japan.

...!



In difficult times,  
it'll be difficult.  
In painful times,  
just let the  
other one know  
that you're in pain.  
There's nothing  
embarrassing  
about doing so.

It's important  
to consider  
another's feelings.  
But sometimes  
you should  
just speak  
without thinking  
too hard about  
your words.

Even if you  
use vulgar language  
in the process,  
it's better than  
not reaching out  
to each other.



I want to  
be strong  
as well.  
Both for  
myself and  
in Kendo.



By that,  
do you  
mean...?

Are you  
saying...?



Running  
away?  
From what...?

I was starting  
to think that  
I should quit  
running away.

From  
myself.



If you cry,  
Araki will  
cry as well.



If you wish  
to work with Araki,  
you must become  
stronger both  
physically  
and mentally.



It is only when  
you reveal your  
weakness to  
each other that  
you can start  
growing stronger.  
Interdependence  
is strength.

If you  
get stronger,  
Araki will  
become  
stronger.



It'll be like  
starting all  
over from  
step one.

E...even  
so...

I was once  
told that my body  
wouldn't move.  
I'm not even sure  
if I can swing  
a shina properly.

I've lost  
muscle and  
I don't have  
stamina  
either.



THO

Don't get  
your hopes up.  
I'm no longer  
who I used  
to be.



I just want to  
assess myself  
of what  
pain I should  
take in life.

By gripping  
the shina.



For...  
for real!?

Before  
I lose  
my way...

I would like to  
swing a shina  
once again.



I'm sure  
you can get  
back to your  
best in  
no time!!

You're  
being  
unreasonable  
now.

No,  
I didn't  
think that  
far ahead yet.  
My down  
period has  
been pretty  
long after all.

You'll  
be fine!!

That means  
you would  
consider  
tournaments  
too!?





! You'll give me a hand at least, right?



And I'm like a novice who can't even swing a shinao decently.

You're number one in Japan.



I'll fight at my full strength!

No, I wouldn't do such thing to offend the 'White Masked Demon.'



Ever since I saw you on the national tournament, you were my goal this whole time. It was my dream!



If you don't want to fight on the big stage, I wouldn't mind it being unofficial!

Please grant me a chance to cross swords with you!



Please, I ask of you!! Just once!!

I'm not talking about you. Currently, I'm no better than a novice...



I know. I'll go through the strenuous practice to make it worthwhile!!

It won't turn into a match, though.

There's a clear difference between our strengths at the moment.



Since  
my body  
has gotten  
weaker!

I should  
go home  
and get to  
my special  
training!



Who  
knows?

Enjoyed,  
since when  
were you...?



Then  
I'll be an  
observer.



I must  
contend to  
rehabilitate  
at Sagano.

I need to  
set up a  
special  
training of  
my own.



Whoa.

How much  
did you  
save/drop?



Of course,  
all the time  
in the world  
wouldn't suffice.  
First I must  
return home,  
inform my  
grandfather,  
then...

W...wait  
a minute!  
Ran!

You're right.  
Wait a  
minute,  
do you plan  
on going  
home  
already!?



I have no  
time to  
waste  
on a fool.  
Move!



It's best  
to put on  
a good face...  
Being  
vigorous  
is best  
for someone  
so small.



It was a pleasure staying here.

I'll miss you all, leaving all too soon...



We already enjoyed more than enough for me to lose sleep. My hip is aching and strange muscles are aching.

How about enjoying a little more of our honeymoon then?



You do realize we're in the middle of our honeymoon, right?

I know.



Yeah.

Kel, you take care of your body.

You take care of yourself too, ma'am.



Yes, of course.

Come by again for a leisure stay.



You said you're going to be an observer, right?

I'll do my best to lighten your physical burden. So come on!

Aren't those the epitome of the honeymoon?



I hope kendo after all...

Yes...

Could you cooperate so I won't lose in an unsightly manner?

I'm going to save stamina until the match.









Yes.

You are aware that you can't be half-hearted with your training, if you intend to exchange blows with him?



It's Kie Sagano, who had the honor of winning the national tournament.



I don't mind but who's the opponent?



Excuse me.



I heard that Igarashi is somewhere around here...



Heiichi Akashiro



He's the midget known as Ushiwakamatsu of Osaka, right? He moves well for a small one.

Hmm.

Yes.



I thought you may have heard of him, grandfather.



However, I have no intention of losing either.



I understand that he's not someone I can beat

He's a tough one, though.



There's a rumor that someone is going around challenging dōjos.



I guess it can't be helped that you think of me like that. I skipped training sessions on a regular basis.

What, are you trying out for Kendo again on a whim?



I was told that he is from Osaka.

What did you come here for!?



But it wasn't easy to find someone of that person's level.

I submitted a challenge to a person. I went around to numerous dōjos...



Train.

I would like to train with you.



It's been a while, Igarashi.



You're Sagano!?



And I was told that you are here at the police academy in Tokyo.



I called Osaka...



The White Masked Demon will be resurrected.



He's back.

But I heard that it was impossible for Samejima to completely recover from his accident!



Please let me train with you.

Igarashi.

I see... Samejima, huh?



Fine, I guess. You won't be able to defeat Samejima as long as you can't beat me. Prepare yourself!

Yes!!



I would like to win against him!!



Since you fought that person up to the semi-finals, I thought you can raise my level to match his.

Then, I remembered. It was you, Igarashi, who crossed swords with that person at least once...



Is it... Could it be...?

Is it Samejima the White Masked Demon!?

That's correct.



Could it be...?

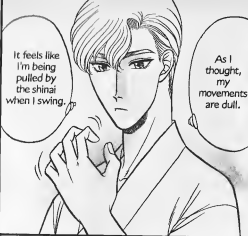
That your opponent is...?



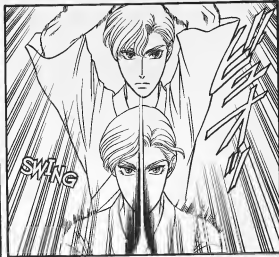
What an unhealthy guy.







As I thought, my movements are dull.





I guess  
I'll beat him  
down and embarrass  
him.



He has a  
small build.  
I wonder if  
he's about  
the same  
as Sagano.



Yes.

Try an  
open sparring  
practice with  
this guy,  
will you?  
You don't need  
to hold back.

You won't  
get a grasp  
of it by  
doing it alone.  
Shirashi,  
are you here?



Fool.  
I'll stop it  
before he  
gets hurt.

He will  
open his eyes  
once he gets  
struck with  
Shirashi's  
speed.

Instructor!  
Do you  
plan on  
crushing  
Shirashi?



I can't  
believe even  
the assistant  
instructor is  
bowing his  
head at this  
feminine  
looking guy.

Hmph!  
I don't know  
if he's the  
grandchild of  
the instructor  
or what not,  
but they're  
spoiling him  
too much.

I don't  
like any of  
this.











I would be honing for revenge right now as well if it wasn't for that shorty running off after winning.



I'm not sure what led Sameguma to a comeback, but the Kendo world is going to be in an uproar this year.



Shut up! Why are you sticking off?

Mom! What did you come here for?

I'm not.



You're all talk! If you really want to win, you should practice more diligently.



I was concerned about Raimuru, so I couldn't help but to come by.

Ooh! If it isn't Kizuko. What's going on?

How are you, Master Sameguma. Thanks for taking care of my foolish son.



Paralysis over half of his body?

Because of an unfortunate accident, he suffered paralysis over half of his body. That accident forced him to step away from Kendo.

He's a feared swordsman who was once known as the White Masked Demon.



Serious? But I never heard...

All the serious Kendo disciples know of the demon called Sameguma.

It was before your time.

You're kidding. He recovered that much from such a condition?



That shorty.

After he retired, Sagano has been carrying on with the victories. You should remember him since you've fought him before.

During Raimuru Sameguma's best days, no one was able to win against him.

He was undefeated until he retired.



To follow her footsteps... There wouldn't be anyone but Ranmaru who can continue the legacy of the White Masked Demon.



I would like to see the gallantry of her son continuing in her stead.

Even though Shizuko passed away, she remains my rival and my goal.

I never managed to defeat her once during her lifetime.



She'll most likely say this should like whoever Ranmaru chooses.

I want my son to walk the path he chooses, just as I have.



I wouldn't want to push my dream onto poor Ranmaru. It'll cause complications.



He'll have it back in no time. His movements are so good I can't sense any hiatus he might have had.



His movements are dull. It's going to be extremely difficult.

How's Ranmaru's condition?



But when he takes up the sword, whether he likes it or not, he'll end up on the big stage.

What do you plan on doing, Master?

I heard Ranmaru said he doesn't plan on moving on to the big stage.

Yes.



How Shizuko's son will fight.

If it's alright by Ranmaru, I would love to help, too. I want to see it, you know...



Whatever he would like. I'd like to have some support, though.



It's alright.  
Hey,  
Ranmaru!

I don't mind,  
but wouldn't  
it end up  
taking a lot  
of your time?



Master,  
would you like  
to entrust  
me with the  
arrangements?  
I have some  
connections.



Huh?  
Mrs.  
Shinashi?

Eh...

Would  
you like to  
practice with  
me next?



You don't  
have to hold  
back for me,  
Bringing it on.

Well then,  
I look  
forward to this.



So, he is  
Mrs.  
Shinashi's  
son.

They do  
look a  
little alike.

What else?  
You're  
100,000  
years too  
early for  
that!!

Don't bust  
in on a  
man's duel!!



Hmm?

It can't be  
helped when  
those around  
Ranmaru  
are so noisy.



Battle?

Although,  
I fear I have  
let my son  
run too freely,  
for he's always  
like that.

He's  
really short  
tempered.

Samejima!  
Battle me  
again!!



The  
Japanese  
national  
tournament  
winner in men's  
singles division,  
Sugano or  
something  
right?

There's  
already  
someone  
gunning  
for him,  
right?



This dojo  
would be fine,  
but the gallery  
won't be able  
to fit in.

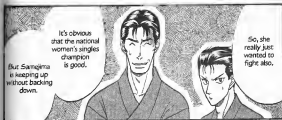
He asked if  
he could use  
this place,  
since it's an  
unofficial  
match.



It's his first  
comeback  
match and  
he seems a  
worthy  
opponent.

Have you  
decided on  
where this  
event would  
take place?

Yes,  
he was  
challenged by  
a troublesome  
opponent.







Wow  
This is quite  
a place to battle

No,  
not really.

Aren't you  
nervous to be  
on the big  
stage after  
such a long  
absence?

My mother's  
friend,  
Mrs. Senraishi,  
found the  
place for me.



This won't  
suffice.  
If I sprawl on  
the floor here,  
I won't be able  
to catch up  
to him...

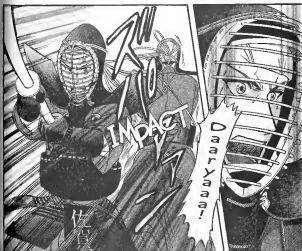
U r y a a!

This is bad.  
My head is  
spinning.  
But...



It should  
be much  
higher up!!

The place  
I seek...  
The point  
where I can  
supercede  
him...







ワアアア  
WOW



Go on with it,  
onto the big stage up until  
the national stage.  
The one who will  
finally defeat you  
will be me.



Regardless of  
today's result,  
don't quit  
Kendo,  
Sanejima.



Please,  
do.

It can  
you later,  
Sanejima.

Well,  
I'm with  
Sagano today,  
so I'll  
be going.



Light.

Today's  
my watch.

Igorashi,  
I had prior  
arrangements.



Yes,  
thank you.

Then,  
we'll be  
entering the  
hall first.



Sure  
thing.

Ah...

Enjiri,  
let's get  
going.



What  
che!?

Huh...?



Hmm?

I lied before.

Enya.



My hands are shaking. They didn't shake the first time I ever competed in a tournament.



Sounds suspicious.

Come here. I have a good luck charm for you.

Just get over here.



It's different from then. It's not excitement from whether or not I'm going to win or lose.

It's a question of how far my hands and body will carry me. How long they will last...



Oh, the word just kept spreading before I realized it. Ah, but the media isn't here, so it's alright.

It's Sandino! He's the real deal!

Sorry, Portman!

Mrs. Shraishi, what exactly is...?



Recall our training together!

Don't lose, Sogano!

Ah, the special force guys.

I don't think it's that kind of problem.

The gallery is filled up.



更衣室

"Locker Room"

At this rate, it's more of a festival than a match!

It's been a while since you last fought, so grandpa is probably just happy.



Um, anyway, let's get to the locker room!

You were an accomplice as well, grandfather?

I don't know what you're talking about.



Yeah.

That's right.  
You'll be watching me.



Just know that I'm always looking at you.



What...

It's fine.



You really are shaking.

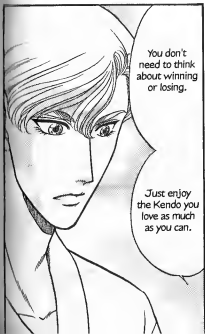


Stabilizer?

Yeah, a mental stabilizer.

This is extra.

I'll take a stabilizer as well.



You don't need to think about winning or losing.

Just enjoy the Kendo you love as much as you can.



Ran, you've gotten stronger.

Don't worry. You can fight for sure.



I plan  
on getting  
clean  
strikes.

Igarashi,  
I have no  
intention of  
doing a point  
earning match.

Listen, Sagano.  
Samejima uses  
Jodan that has both  
speed and power.  
First, his guard  
has to be...

Bash  
to your  
starting  
lines!!

I would like  
to supersede  
him with my  
own sword!

I won't be able  
to go beyond  
him as long as  
I mimic him.

Sonkyo!!

Mm?

Sagano!!

Sneezing  
Ah-mee!!

Apparently he's  
very relaxed,  
so you got nothing  
to worry about.

It'll be the  
one who will  
defeat you!!

Don't you  
lose here!

He's doing  
this on  
purpose.

すか  
STAGER

Who  
are you?

Ah, that's Mrs.  
Marachi,  
champion  
of the  
national  
women's  
league.

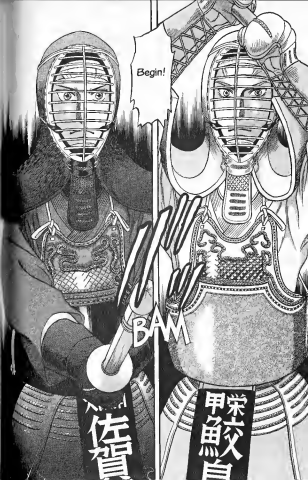
Sorry about  
the trouble.

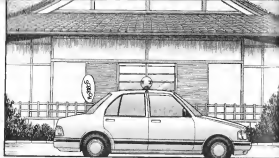
おれ  
おれ  
おれ

WHACK

SHU

It's me,  
Tachi  
Shirashi!  
I fought you  
at the last  
tournament!!











This was quite flashy...  
Not bad.



Sagano, what the hell are you doing!

One hit on the face!

Whoa, Igarashi...



I guess a full recovery in such a short period of time is too much to ask for.

Ran's breathing is already labored.  
Kai has higher stamina, I guess.



Ranmen, keep it up!  
Calm down and go on strike it's time!

Ah...



Huh?



His body is open!



Gee...  
Ha...

STRIKE







Flammaris!



Y...yes.

Are you  
alright,  
Ranmaru?

Can you  
continue?



What is  
it all of a  
sudden,  
Einyoji?



ふっ  
ん!!



I can still  
fight on.

Yeah,  
no worries.



Thanks to  
Einyoji



Grap...!



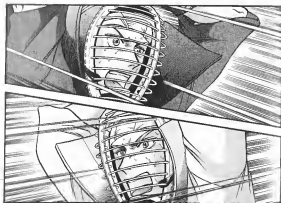
Follow  
through wasn't  
good enough.  
It won't be  
counted as  
a valid blow.



Aww,  
damn it!  
If only he  
didn't fall!!

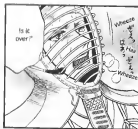
SWISH

THUD



His spirit  
is like a  
slightly  
burning  
flame.  
This is the  
White Masked  
Demon!!







You've just beaten who you were up until yesterday and have risen above.

Become even stronger, Sagano.



I don't think Kendo is about beating other people, but more about beating yourself.

Your talent with the sword is the real thing. But it shouldn't end here.



Samejima, thank you very much.



Ugh...



Thank you very much.

Yes.



You can go much higher. Become stronger.



I rushed too much, wishing for victory. I was full of openings. Your strike to the body was an amazing strike.

It's my complete loss!



No way!

Congratulations. It was my complete loss.







Hello,  
Master.



No.  
I just thought it  
was pretty  
thoughtful,  
considering  
it was you.

What,  
does it  
concern  
you?



Mm?

You called  
Araka,  
huh?



And where  
would you  
put all these  
people?

アサキ  
アサキ

Well then,  
let's go on  
to celebrate!



Entyaji informed  
me that you  
had a match with  
Samejima today.

Ah,  
I see.



Ah.

I was  
surprised.  
I had no idea  
you came.



Masa!

Ah!



アサキ  
アサキ

アサキ  
アサキ  
アサキ



In my  
blank mind,  
your face  
appeared.



And...

I feel as if my  
stiff shoulders  
can relax now  
and my head  
feels empty.



Yep.



It was  
a great  
match.



I was  
surprised that  
you were  
really there.



Your face  
appeared  
and called me  
*'Master.'*



I thought  
it was some  
sort of a  
hallucination  
or...

I really  
wanted  
to see you.



I fought as  
hard as I'd wanted to  
and when I heard  
the match was set,  
I just felt great.

During  
the match,  
every blow  
from Samejima  
felt as if it  
took away  
my problems.



I'm glad I  
had this match.  
It cleared  
my head...

...Of all the  
jumbled pieces  
from when I  
just trained  
recklessly.





You should look me in the eyes when you thank me.



Well, then!



Aniki.



No, not at all.

Thanks to you, I was able to watch a great match. Thank you.



Not at all, I'm grateful.

I appreciate your concern.

Sorry for calling you out when you're so far away.



I'm about to change.

He's outside.

Everyone's waiting. Get changed already. Where's Aniki?



Kia.



Am?

Ah!

Wait a second.



Thanks for calling Masa.



I'll only say it once.



Dammit,  
I forgot  
to turn off  
the phone.

Boss!  
I finally  
got you!  
Where  
are you  
right now?



Just  
today...

I can't!

Can't  
you handle  
it?

I'll send  
someone to pick  
you up  
right away,  
so return  
immediately  
please!

No  
way!



Tokyo!?  
Why so far  
and all of a  
sudden?

Tokyo.

What  
were you  
thinking?



Ah,  
Sure,  
I'll let  
him know.  
Sure...



BEEP



Remember  
what?

Remember  
this,  
Kyouzuke.



They're  
both  
strong.

I thought I had to  
protect him all the time.  
But after watching  
today's match,  
I learned that it was no  
more than my ego.



Karl's  
probably  
the same.

It feels like  
I'm being  
protected  
rather than  
doing the  
protecting.



Ah,  
thanks.

Yes.  
They sure are.  
Enough to  
stagger us.



Ah,  
excuse  
me.



Indeed...  
You may  
be right.



Araki  
went home.



Yeah, I'll see  
you some  
other time.

I'll be  
excusing  
myself!

Eh?  
Segano,  
you're going  
home?



Ah,  
don't worry  
'bout it.

Araki's  
here,  
right?

I'm sorry,  
but I'll  
pass on the  
celebration!



Mm?  
Segano?

Pardon,  
coming through  
for a shower!!



He told  
me to give  
you his  
regards.



He seemed  
to have  
snuck out  
of work,  
so he got  
called back in.

Eh?



I'm not sure.  
This stench  
from this  
equipment  
doesn't come  
off easily.

Right!?  
Aah,  
darnit!



Hey,  
do you think  
this shower  
will remove  
the smell?

Yeah,  
that's right.  
I was  
surprised.



I don't  
recall ever  
taking it  
leisurely  
with him.



Leisurely?

You can talk  
it leisurely  
with him  
next time.

Um, Segano.  
He squeezed  
out time to  
come see you  
when he  
was so busy.



Me,  
too.



But I'm glad  
Araki came  
by for you.



I was relieved for a moment...

It's just in the middle of two territories.

Excuse me Boss. It's about the snack place that opened on 3rd street.

I was surprised that the Boss disappeared all of a sudden to Tokyo, but he's back for now.



Well, let them roll on it. Whatever.

Huh?

There's a dispute about whether it belongs to the Kurobe side or the Noda side. They sent out two representatives wishing you to make a decision.



He's in a horrible mood ever since he got back.

Sir. Sorry to bother you, sir!

Kurobe and Noda are both under our jurisdiction! Tell them to not bother us for insignificant crap.



Ouch! Why do I have to get hit?

Calm down, Sogano.



He'll be swinging a shiral at me the next time I see him.

Ah, there, there.

He must have been really happy from winning.

Uwaaaaan.



Ah.

It's Masa.  
I'm sorry about  
that today.  
I just finished  
my work,  
so if it's alright,  
I'll head  
over there  
right now.



No  
wonder  
he's all  
edgy.

Damn,  
I was  
right.

Don.



This is so  
depressing!  
Don't call me,  
moron!!

Don't come,  
stupid!  
I don't even  
want to see  
your face!



Umm,  
Boss?



Don't  
call me,  
moron!!



All?  
What  
else?

Next.

Ah, this  
is all.

This  
sums  
it up.



I'm done.  
Input the  
data.

You're done  
already?  
That was fast.



Even if it  
doesn't take  
much time,  
they were  
important  
documents  
you had to  
take care of!

Did you  
have me come  
back on such  
short notice  
to work on  
documents?



Yes?

Kyouzuke,  
lend me  
your ear.



Don't  
call me,  
moron!!

Don't  
call me,  
moron!!



Did you  
have your  
woman wait  
in Tokyo or  
something?

Why are  
you on edge  
like that?  
You always  
do this.





I won't forgive him no matter how many times he apologizes.

That idiot. Scupid!!



No!

Sagano, forgive him already.



Who else has such a cute voice?

Are you stupid? Of course it was the Master.

Similar?



If it's not my imagination, that woman's voice sounded very similar to the Master's voice.

The way the person spoke, etc.

Yep



Kin, you should go back to Osaka for now.

Rin, let's go home.

Sagano, I think you should stop drinking.

Don't worry your beggars (old man).

I hate him. But I love him!



It may be better than them fighting.

My phone is off.

It was a guess to begin with, but... No, I'm thinking too much.

I want to ask, but can't ask about their secret.

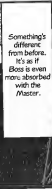


That's true.



I'll call again later to apologize.

What happened between the two of them?

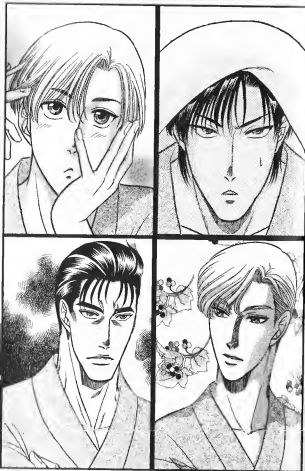


Something's different from before. It's as if Boss is even more absorbed with the Master.



It's rare for the boss to doze on the Master.

Conclusion, I'll be on both of your sides regardless of what happens between you two. I think. - Kyousuke.



# Afterword

